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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3632/01 3211053
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161053Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0415
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003632

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: KIRKUK LEADERS' DISCUSSIONS WITH SPECIAL ADVISOR,
PART I: SOFA AND ELECTIONS

Classified By: PRT KIRKUK TEAM LEADER HOWARD KEEGAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (a)
AND (d)

[11](#). (U) This is a PRT Kirkuk reporting cable.

[12](#). (C) This is the first of two cables on November 10 meetings Senior Advisor (S/A) Krajeski had with Kirkuki Arab, Turkmen, and Kurdish provincial leaders' views on Kirkuk-specific issues. This cable reports on Kirkuki comments on the SOFA and Article 23.

SUMMARY

[13](#). (C) Only the Turkmen engaged on the SOFA, favoring it. While the representatives of each group reinforced currently-known positions, all professed to support Article [123](#). Despite each bloc's starkly differing opinions on these issues, S/A Krajeski lauded their continued efforts to discuss the issues peacefully while working together to prevent violence. All groups emphasized the need for more GOI investment in projects in the province. END SUMMARY.

[14](#). (SBU) S/A Krajeski met Kurdish Governor Abdulrahman Mustafa, Arab Deputy Governor Rakan Saeed, Kurdish Provincial Council Chair Rizgar Ali (jointly with KDP PC member Mohammed Kamal), and key provincial council members from the Turkmen and Arab blocs in Kirkuk. Rizgar, a PUK member, may have summoned Kamal, the province's leading KDP member, to demonstrate KDP-PUK solidarity on the points Rizgar would make. In each meeting S/A Krajeski emphasized that Kirkuk officials should seize the opportunity to develop solutions to the problems facing the province themselves before Baghdad and Erbil, as well as foreign governments, intervene more directly.

SOFA

[15](#). (C) Only PC Shi'a Turkmen members Tahseen Kahea and Najat Hussein discussed the SOFA. They expressed solid support for it, noting that it was superior to any other option available for ensuring security in Iraq under current circumstances. Despite delays in its adoption, they expressed confidence in its ultimate acceptance. Tahseen voiced his support for the agreement, but expressed concern about foreign countries (Iran) who do not want Iraq to sign the SOFA, and what he imagined were additional secret security agreements attached to it.

[16](#). (C) The two detailed a split in opinion on the SOFA in the Turkman community along sectarian lines, with the Shi'a Turkmen supporting it and the Sunni Turkmen opposing. According to Najat, the Sunni Turkmen feel excluded from engagement with GOI and believe it is neglecting Sunni interests. As a result, they instinctively oppose the SOFA as a creature of the Shi'a majority in Baghdad. Both he and Tahseen believed, however, that Sunni opposition to the SOFA would be overcome as they learned more about it.

¶7. (C) Tahseen and Najat (Turkmen) thought that the success of the Article 23 committee depended upon the Kurds: "if they have good intentions, it will succeed," but without active Kurdish support, it would fail. Tahseen stated that, despite imperfect elections, the PC already had a fair division of seats among the ethnicities. He favored allocating executive branch positions in provincial and district government. (NOTE: Tahseen's satisfaction with the current allocation of PC seats is largely due to Turkman over-representation in the PC, a result of the Arab boycott of the 2005 provincial elections. END NOTE). Though Tahseen supported the Article 23 committee, he saw a challenge in the requirement that its recommendations to the Council of Representative be unanimous.

¶8. (C) Najat saw the Article 23 committee as "a secret operation" since very little has been published on the committee. He added that unlike the Arabs and the Turkmen, the Kurds oppose the mission of the Article 23 committee. As a result, he believed that the committee would not be able to change the situation in Kirkuk.

¶9. (C) While agreeing with its ultimate goal of establishing a framework for elections in Kirkuk, PC Chair Rizgar (Kurd) criticized the mechanism of the Article 23 committee. He objected specifically to its being composed of Council of Representatives (CoR) members. He felt that Baghdad-based politicians would "play games" with Kirkuk. Mohammed Kamal interjected that the Article 23 committee would fail because

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the forces blocking implementation of Article 140 of the Constitution and Articles 58 and 53 of the Transitional Administrative Law (the central GOI) will do the same with Article 23. He went further to claim that Maliki is systematically centralizing the government and has a "dictator mentality."

¶10. (C) Rizgar adamantly asserted that PC seats should be determined solely according to election results, opposing quotas of seats for each ethnicity. He predicted that some Turkmen might choose to vote for Kurds, and others similarly might vote separately from their ethnic group. He proposed an alternative solution of a second chamber of the provincial council, with a quota of seats reserved for ethnicity, to guarantee a minimum number of seats for each group. Rizgar also supported the idea of allocating executive offices (Governor, Deputy Governor, PC Chair) among the ethnicities.

¶11. (C) Governor Abdulrahman (Kurd) is ready to cooperate with the article 23 committee; however he claimed to have heard nothing about their proceedings so far, and was waiting to meet with the committee--originally supposed to have visited Kirkuk November 1. The Governor preferred to let voters choose directly who sits on the PC rather than establishing quotas for each ethnic group.

¶12. (C) Arab PC member Burhan Al Ubedi said that those who could most help the Article 23 Committee to carry out its work were afraid of speaking to it for fear of political reprisals from Kurdish parties. He hoped that the GOI would take a strong role in Kirkuk to counter Kurdish influence.

SECURITY IN KIRKUK -----

¶13. (C) Turkman PC member Tahseen stated that, despite isolated incidents, security in Kirkuk was good. He hoped that this would in turn promote investment, and expected the Provincial Investment Committee to capitalize on the relative calm in Kirkuk. Kurd PC Chair Rizgar Ali agreed, believing that Kirkuk is in good condition, and "the heat is lower."

